

ACS Reading Buddies Help Kids Form Bonds with Words

By Lucy Hood

Less than a year ago, some local school children thought reading was about as much fun as seasickness. But thanks to more than two dozen ACS staffers, these kids now can sail through books as easily as schooners skittering along in the Chesapeake Bay.

The children, ages 5 to 13, attend the School for Arts in Learning Public Charter Elementary School (SAIL), located less than a block from ACS. For most of the past school year, 25 ACS employees walked over there weekly to help a child at the school learn how to read.

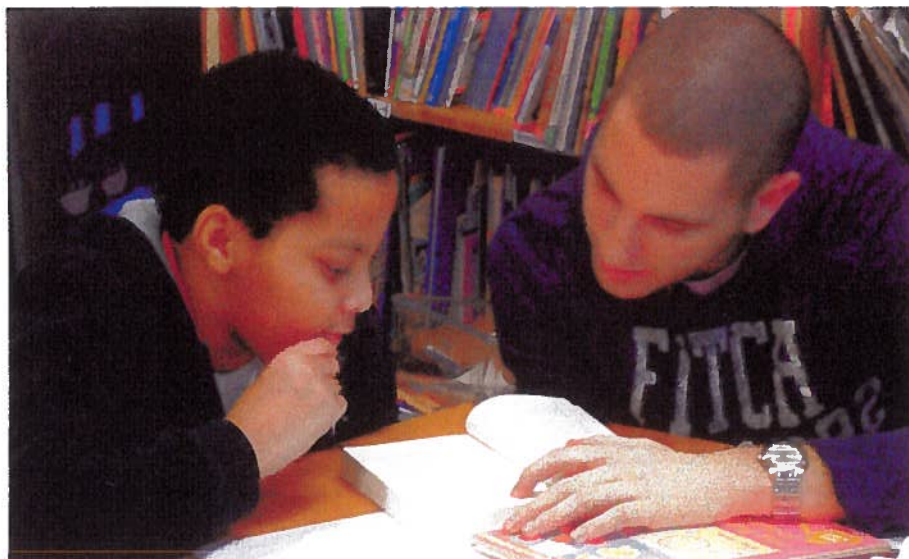
It was the first year ACS participated in the school's **Reading and Literacy Buddies Program**, and it was a huge success, said Patti Galvan, who runs the ACS Kids & Chemistry program. She organized the Reading Buddies program for the Staff Council Community Outreach Committee.

The participation, she said, is even more remarkable because of the time commitment. The Reading Buddies program requires ACS volunteers to commit to 30 minutes a week for roughly nine months.

"I was very impressed with the large turnout," Galvan said. "I thought we'd get 10 people. That was my goal. And then we had 25, and that was just the Reading Buddies. We also had three Math Buddies."

ACS staff participation in the Reading Buddies program began in October 2008. A math program started in February. This year, both the Reading and the Math Buddies programs will start at about the same time, in either late September or early October.

The Reading Buddies program, which has been in place at the school for several years, matches every child with a professional person. Last year, the school had 150 students in kindergarten through 7th grade. This year it is adding an 8th grade class, and Principal Terry Bunton said he expects to enroll at least 170 students.



Reading Buddies help students at the School for the Arts in Learning (SAIL) prepare for the academic challenges that await them. In all, more than 20 ACS volunteers participated in the program last year. Photo courtesy of the School for Arts in Learning.

Each student will be paired with a reading buddy, said JoAnne Stanback, coordinator of the Math and Reading Buddies Program. The math program started out last year as a pilot program, and Stanback hopes to expand it this year to include all students.

The goal of both programs is twofold. The school wants to provide its largely economically disadvantaged student population with extra academic assistance. But the school also wants the adult reading buddies to be mentors and role models for the kids.

"Sometimes they're reading," Stanback added. "Sometimes they're talking about personal problems. But they (the students) have a bond with a person that is only for them. They don't have to share. It's their special time."

Krystal Diouf, who works with the ACS Scholars Program, had a sixth-grade reading buddy last year. At times, she said, her reading buddy had something on his mind and he wanted to talk about it.

Eventually, her buddy began looking forward to her visits, Diouf said. By the end of the school year, he wanted her to continue to be his reading buddy during the summer and again this year, even

though he was leaving SAIL and going to a different school.

Lara Kadylak, manager of annual giving in the Development Office, had a similar experience. So did Jim McHugh, an ACS data architect who chairs the Staff Council Community Outreach Committee, and Michael Mury, who works in the Office of High School Chemistry.

All three said they got as much from the Reading Buddies program as they gave, and this trio, as well as Diouf and Galvan, said they planned to do it again this year.

For Kadylak and her second-grade reading buddy, there were "good days and bad days." The bad days were more predominant the first part of the year when he was reluctant to read. But as time went by, he changed his mind.

"I would make a big deal out of every little thing," she said. "When he would get a word correct, I'd say, 'That's great. You're improving.' I did the same thing with his behavior. When I told his teacher, you could tell he was excited."

By the end of the school year, Kadylak said, he was ready to read, and she was

Continued on page 8

Reading Buddies *Continued from page 6*

ready to do it all over again. "It's been a good experience for me as well. I definitely enjoyed it."

Ditto for McHugh, who hopes to work with his second-grade reading buddy again this year. "It's a great experience," he said.

Mury is a former high school science teacher. He became a reading buddy because it gave him an opportunity to work with students again. He hopes the Reading Buddies program will lead to greater collaboration with teachers at the school, so that ACS can contribute not only with reading, but with science as well.

"Their school is focused on the arts, so they don't do a lot of science," Mury said. "It would be very cool to work

with teachers to bring science into the classroom."

In addition to ACS, several other organizations participate in the program, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Justice, and George Washington, American and Georgetown universities. However, among these institutions, ACS provides the second largest group of volunteers.

Encouraging others at ACS to participate, McHugh said, "You won't be disappointed. You will find it both rewarding and uplifting for your own personal life."

To volunteer or learn more about participating in these programs during the 2009-2010 school year, contact Patti Galvan at ext. 6168.



A publication of the American Chemical Society

August 2009

The Phoenix

**To learn more about Reading and Math Buddies
at the School for ARTs in Learning (SAIL) Public Charter School:**

Contact Reading and Math Buddy Coordinator JoAnne Stanback
at (202) 261-0216 or e-mail jstanback@wvsarts.org.

To fill out an on-line application, go to www.wvsarts.org
and click on "Get Involved" and the "Volunteer" tab.

The School for ARTs in Learning is a unique K-8 public charter school
providing multiple creative environments, opportunities, and experiences
for all children through arts-infused academic programs.

SAIL is located at 1100 16th Street, NW on the corner of 16th and L Street.